



Wyoming Game and Fish Department **NEWSLETTER**

Cody Region

WEBSITE: WGFD.WYO.GOV

FEBRUARY 2015

Forever Wild Families: Passing along our hunting heritage

Inside this Issue

- Youth pheasant hunt.....2
- Bighorn River trout.....3
- Bighorn sheep surveys...4
- Wood River moose.....6

G&F Calendar

2015 Season Setting meetings:

- 3/19, Thermopolis 6-8 p.m.
Historical Museum
- 3/19, Powell 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Park County Fairgrounds
- 3/19, Greybull 6-8 p.m.
Town Hall
- 3/23, Meeteetse 6-8 p.m.
Meeteetse Senior Center
- 3/24, Worland 6-8 p.m.
Washakie Co. Fairgrounds
- 3/25, Lovell 6-8 p.m.
Lovell Fire Hall
- 3/26, Cody 6-8 p.m.
Bighorn Federal Bank

Stay Connected



Jonny Williams of Cody with his first rabbit harvested during an outing with Forever Wild Families.

Forever Wild Families, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s newest hunter and angler recruitment program is working hard to pass along our outdoor heritage to a new generation. Now in its second year in Cody, the program has given many Cody and Powell area families hands-on opportunities to learn skills associated with hunting and fishing.

Forever Wild Families provides a safe environment and patient mentors for families with little to no previous hunting or fishing experience. “Over the course of a year, participants ‘learn by doing’ by participating in a series of workshops designed to teach skills associated with hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities,” said Information and Education Specialist Tara Hodges. “Game and Fish staff and community mentors provide equipment, teachers and the expertise of “where to go” and “what to do” for each outing.”

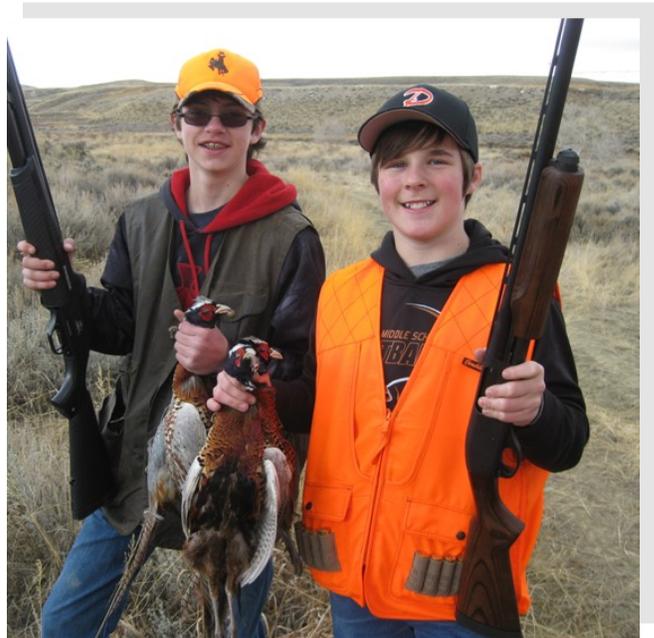
If you would like to participate or know someone who would, contact Tara Hodges at 307 527-7125 or tara.hodges@wyo.gov. Forever Wild Families is also seeking community mentors who wish to pass along their knowledge, skill, and interest in outdoor activities.

Youth pheasant hunt



A young hunter participating in a youth pheasant hunt last month hosted by the Northwest Chapter of the Wild Turkey Federation, Bighorn Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever, and Triple KB Ranch and bird farm.

North Cody Game Warden Travis Crane and Powell Game Warden Chris Queen participated in a youth hunting event near Cody in February. Over 50 young hunters participated in the event that was put on by the Northwest Chapter of the Wild Turkey Federation, Bighorn Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever, and Triple KB Ranch and Bird Farm out of Cody. The day started off with shooting trap at the Cody Shooting Complex to improve their shooting skills and later that afternoon, youth participated in a pheasant hunt. Each participant was allowed to hunt with a mentor, behind a trained bird dog, and allowed to harvest two pheasants. The Wyoming Game Wardens Association purchased game bird licenses for those who did not already have one. The event provided many young hunters their first opportunity to participate in a pheasant hunt.



Tate Barhaug (left) and Reiley Meyer (right) with pheasants harvested as part of a youth hunt.

Bighorn River trout population

It's no secret the trout fishery on the Wedding of the Waters section of the Bighorn River has been nothing shy of fantastic the last handful of years. And for better or worse, the word on this fishery has spread well outside the Big Horn Basin. The increased use on this section of river has raised concerns among some anglers that excessive harvest and increased catch-and-release mortality have negatively impacted the trout population in recent years. Below is a look at the current abundance and size structure of the Bighorn River



Fisheries Biologist Sam Hochhalter showing off a beautiful Bighorn River brown trout captured during the 2014 population survey.

The number of trout per mile of river is a key metric used by biologists and fishermen alike to gauge the status and quality of a fish population.

The Bighorn River trout population has been relatively stable the last five years and the most recent abundance estimate conducted last October showed approximately 3,000 trout/mile, the highest abundance ever recorded for this population. To put this number in perspective, this trout population is second only to the Grey Reef section of the North Platte River in terms of trout abundance in Wyoming, and is more than three times the number of trout per mile compared to the North Fork of the Shoshone River and the upper Green River.

It's not just the abundance of trout in the Bighorn that makes the fishery impressive. Relatively fast growth rates promote a fairly large size structure in both the rainbow and brown trout populations. The percent of rainbows that are 16 inches in length or longer has increased steadily over the last six years from 17 percent in 2009 to a high of 54 percent in 2014.

Trout management in the Bighorn River has been a work in progress for nearly two decades. Perhaps the biggest hurdle to overcome in order to produce the abundance and size structure of trout realized today is management of fine sediment. Fine sediment suffocates incubating trout eggs and reduces invertebrate productivity. Annual spring flushing flows help transport accumulated sediment down stream which results in improved wild trout recruitment and increased invertebrate production. These flushing flows are the result of negotiations and cooperation between Game and Fish and the Bureau of Reclamation. In addition, several studies found that stocking rainbow trout at a size of six inches or longer before mid-July is necessary to ensure survival through the winter. Meeting this benchmark has helped improve the effectiveness of our stocking efforts. We will continue to stock 16,000 rainbows and 8,000 Snake River cutthroat trout annually in this section of river.

Bighorn sheep Hunt Area 4 surveyed



A ram climbs the north slope of Thorofare Mountain on 2/23/2015. This is near the point where the Thorofare and the North and South Forks of the Yellowstone River originate.

Wildlife Biologist Doug McWhirter and Wildlife Management Coordinator Tim Woolley conducted an aerial classification survey of bighorn sheep in Hunt Area 4 in late February. A total of 327 sheep were classified in the Cody Region portion of Hunt Area 4 (South Fork Shoshone, Thorofare, Upper Yellowstone), and lamb:ewe and ram:ewe ratios were 35:100 and 43:100, respectively. This is in addition to Hunt Area 4 surveys completed in the Lander Region in mid-January, which yielded a total of 134 sheep, a lamb:ewe ratio of 38:100 and a ram:ewe ratio of 45:100.

These figures represent a return to sample sizes obtained in the Cody Region from the mid-1990s to a population decline initiated by the spring of 2011. Sample sizes in the Lander Region remain 40 percent lower than that seen from the mid-1990s to 2011. Ram:ewe ratios remain at acceptable levels and the lamb:ewe ratios seen on these surveys were among the best of all sheep herds sampled postseason 2014.



A group of bighorns on winter range near Wall Mountain in the Upper South Fork Shoshone River. This is what bighorn sheep winter range looks like at over 11,000 feet.

Wood River moose



Two of eight moose observed on the Wood River during a survey in February.

Wildlife Biologist Bart Kroger conducted a moose survey along the Wood River in mid-February. A total of eight moose were observed, including four cows, two calves and two bulls. This was the most moose Kroger has ever seen on the Wood River at one time.



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